

SPECIFICATION:

Paragraph 9, replace with the following new paragraph:

Known methods for transferring data between a host device and a plurality of portable computers, such as U.S. Pat. Nos. ~~5,621,980~~ 5,621,890 and 5,301,346 to Notarianni, et al, are applicable to pen-based computers such as a Palm Pilot, and make no provision for a plurality of messaging nodes or the interconnection dynamics of the messaging node with a network. A geographic based communications service, described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,259,405 to Brett, et al, provides messages to users in response to their physical location and demographic characteristics, but the method is not useful for person-to-person messages, and presumes a wireless network with a wide coverage area. A method for a geographic-based communications service, described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,969,678 to Stewart, depends upon realtime communications with a central server or message source, and provides ~~locationdependent~~ location dependent content. A method and apparatus for computed relevance messaging, described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,256,664 to Donoho, et al, provides for the delivery of a subset of all possible automated messages to a user, but does not dynamically determine message selection to ~~accommodate~~ accommodate a network resource limitation. A method for checking the access rights of subscriber equipment, described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,091,946 to Ahvenainen, provides for the verification of the account status of a portable messaging unit, but depends upon a stable association between physical equipment and specific user accounts. A method for conducting internet searches from a portable computer, described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,978,833 to Pashley, et al, depends upon on-demand communications being available between the portable computer and the network serving as a repository of the search target data.

After paragraph 32, add the following new paragraphs:

FIG. 7 Delivery of an incoming message 17 in messaging system 10

FIG. 8 Temporal view of proactive buffering and delivery of incoming message 17 in messaging system 10

After paragraph 36, add the following new paragraphs:

17 Incoming message

18 Header

After paragraph 85, add the following new paragraphs:

FIG. 7 shows the delivery of an incoming message 17 within messaging system 10. Upon receipt at central server 12, a user account is identified from the list of message recipients indicated in message header 18. Association table 80 is consulted to determine the primary messaging zone 82 associated with the user account, and incoming message 17 is transmitted over instances of first communications link 70 to the nodes of messaging nodes 14 that make up primary messaging zone 82. The user operates a portable messaging unit 40, and establishes a temporary second communications link 72 between portable messaging unit 40 and an arbitrary user-selected messaging node 20 within

primary messaging zone 82. Incoming message 17 is then transmitted over this second communications link 72, and the message is then available for review on portable messaging unit 40.

FIG. 8 shows a temporal view of the same process of delivering an incoming message 17 within messaging system 10, including proactive buffering of incoming message 17 at messaging nodes within primary messaging zone 82. Upon receipt at central server 12, once the primary messaging zone 82 has been identified, incoming message 17 is transmitted over intermittent first communications links 70 to each of the messaging nodes within primary messaging zone 82 when a communications opportunity is available (periods when such a link is connected are illustrated with a circle on the line for first communications link 70 in the temporal illustration, and links to different nodes may happen at different times). When transmitted to a messaging node, the message is then buffered at that messaging node, and available for delivery to a user even when first communications link 70 from that node to central server 12 is not connected. A user may connect a portable messaging unit 40 to any messaging node where incoming message 17 is locally buffered to collect the message over temporary second communications link 72. When this is done, a cancellation command is buffered on the messaging node for delivery to central server 12. When received at central server 12, the cancellation command to delete locally buffered copies of incoming message 17 is sent to other messaging nodes where the delivered incoming message 17 is still buffered, when communications opportunities through intermittent first communications links 70 to these nodes are available.